

ABSTRACT

LOBENE, ELENI. Moderation of Perceived Overqualification: An Exploration of Career Calling. (Under the direction of Drs. Adam Meade, Samuel Pond, Mark Wilson, and Bart Craig.)

While perceived overqualification (POQ) has received increased research attention in recent years, the identification of variables that moderate POQ-outcome relationships is the next critical step in increasing our understanding of the construct (Erdogan and Bauer, 2009; Erdogan, Bauer, Peiro, & Truxillo, 2011). This study, involving 170 full-time educators, found that POQ is negatively related to job satisfaction and affective commitment, while positively related to turnover intentions and desire to turnover. While it was not significantly related to performance or continuance organizational commitment, these relationships were significantly moderated by the experience of career calling orientation. Generally, the relationship between POQ and performance was stronger, and the relationship between POQ and continuance organizational commitment was weaker, for those with high calling. The implications surrounding these results, and opportunities for future investigation, are discussed.

Moderation of Perceived Overqualification:
An Exploration of Career Calling

by
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DEDICATION

To my saint-of-a-husband Adam, for his “blind faith” and unwavering confidence in me and my abilities.

Also, to my parents and family... for the same reasons.

In the wise words of a dear friend Ashley, “fake it ‘til you make it.”

BIOGRAPHY

Eleni is a Northern Virginia native who sped through her education. She finished high school in three years, college in three years, and her en route masters and Ph.D. in four years. She is happy to be finished with the academic chapter of her life.

Eleni just celebrated her 3rd anniversary with her husband Adam. She plans to work in research and is eager to travel, start a family, and enjoy all aspects of life that don't involve exams and reading! She enjoys spending time with her church community and attributes 100% of her success to God's crazy plan.

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Moderation of Perceived Overqualification:

An Exploration of Career Calling

Recent years have seen an increased recognition of overqualification in the workplace. During the recessed economy starting in 2008, some organizations began seizing opportunities to hire highly skilled and educated individuals that would otherwise be unavailable or unaffordable (Gallo, 2011; Katcher, 2010). The psychological and long-term financial consequences of such hiring practices are just beginning to emerge, creating an increased interest in the concept of overqualification. Fine (2007) defines perceived overqualification (POQ) as being “the degree to which individuals perceive themselves (or others) as possessing more than the required job qualifications” (p. 61) and although POQ is a subjective experience, Maynard, Joseph, and Maynard (2006) argue that POQ is more relevant than objective levels of overqualification for predicting work outcomes. Johnson, Morrow, and Johnson (2002) support the notion that POQ is worth investigating since it is a meaningful and applicable interpretation of the work environment by the employee.

While a growing body of literature exists relating POQ to a number of important outcomes such as lower job satisfaction (Fine, 2007; Fine & Nevo, 2008; Johnson & Johnson, 2000a, 2000b; Johnson et al., 2002; Lee, 2005), higher turnover intentions (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Kraimer, Shaffer, & Bolino, 2009; Maynard et al., 2006; McKee-Ryan, Virick, Prussia, & Lilly, 2009), and increased performance (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Fine & Nevo, 2008), few studies have investigated variables that may moderate these empirically established relationships. Although few researchers have explored variables such as empowerment (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009) and personal initiative (Agut, Piero, & Grau, 2009) as moderators of POQ, further exploration of moderators is the next important theoretical

step for the perceived overqualification literature (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Erdogan, Bauer, Peiro, & Truxillo, 2011). The aim of this study is to further explain POQ's relationship with relevant work outcomes through the lens of a previously unexplored moderator variable: career calling orientation. Career calling is an experience characterized by opportunity to do socially beneficial work that is also personally fulfilling (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Career calling will be used to investigate the relationship between POQ and valuable work outcomes. Such outcomes include attitudinal variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intentions, and desire to turnover, in addition to performance.

Theoretical Development

While much of the previous work on POQ has drawn directly on the person-job fit literature and has emphasized underutilization of skills, Johnson and Johnson (2000) applied relative deprivation theory to explain POQ from a more psychological perspective.

According to relative deprivation theory, unpleasant feelings result from the discrepancy between actual experiences and a priori expectations (cf. Mirowsky & Ross, 1989).

Moreover, the experience and degree of deprivation are dependent on the distance (i.e., degree of dissimilarity) between expectations and actual experience (Feldman, Leana, & Turnley, 1997). Johnson and Johnson maintained that the discrepancy between work expectations and the experience of not being able to fully utilize KSAOs results in POQ.

Like Johnson and Johnson (2000), we postulate that POQ is accurately represented as a function of both cognitive perceptions *and affective reactions* to the job environment.

While we believe that POQ can arise via the discrepancy experienced with underutilized KSAOs, importantly, we also posit that POQ is a function, not only of the cognitive realization of underutilized skills, but also the negative affective reactions of discrepancy associated with the underutilization of these skills. Previous research has identified a positive relationship between equity sensitivity and one's awareness of his or her overqualification status (Sauley & Bedeian, 2000).

Another mechanism by which POQ arises, not previously mentioned in the POQ literature, is via general feelings of serving in a job of lower value than what an employee feels that he or she is worth. Employees may identify this undesirable status through the recognition of various contextual signals. Relevant outcomes may include underutilization of KSAOs, but also may include lower pay, lower social status, a lack of influence, and the absence other intangible rewards. Should employees feel that the job outcomes indicate they are in a lower status position than what they expect given their qualifications, feelings of POQ may result. In other words, negative affective reactions may derive from not only from the underutilization of KSAOs in the work environment as has been previously hypothesized, but from a discrepancy with other work-related outcomes as well.

As will be discussed in later sections, the experience of calling is expected to mitigate POQ by potentially interacting with the mechanisms that cause it. It is possible that although a priori expectations may not be met, one's KSAOs may not be fully utilized, and one's position may serve as a signal of low-status, the individual may be more willing to tolerate the discrepancy when simultaneously experiencing a calling. Since the pursuit of a calling

often involves voluntary sacrifice (Buskist, Benson, & Sikorski, 2005; Hall, 2008) in order to do highly rewarding work (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), the experience of a calling orientation may reduce the negative affective reactions associated with the experience of POQ.

Relevant Work Outcomes

Turnover attitudes. Numerous negative outcomes are associated with hiring ill-suited employees, such as decreases in productivity, lower profit margins (Sagie, Birati, & Tziner, 2002; Salgado, Viswesvaran, & Ones, 2001), and contagious employee withdrawal (Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine, 2007; Sagie et al., 2002) including employee turnover (McCulloch & Turban, 2007; Sagie et al., 2002; Zimmerman, 2008). Voluntary employee withdrawal behaviors include withholding effort at work, lateness, absenteeism, and turnover (Sagie et al., 2002). Among the consequences of employee withdrawal are unfinished work, unmet commitments, and reduced profitability (Sagie et al., 2002). Failing to select well-suited employees can eventually lead to the most expensive form of withdrawal, employee turnover (McCulloch & Turban, 2007; Sagie et al., 2002; Zimmerman, 2008).

Rather than investigating actual turnover, turnover intentions and desire to turnover are included in this study. Maynard et al. (2006) defined turnover intentions as the extent to which an individual plans to leave an organization or position of employment. Turnover intentions are often measured instead of actual turnover, as intentions reveal valuable information about an individual's plans and expectations (Mobley, 1977). Turnover intentions typically predict turnover (Mobley, 1977; Zimmerman, 2008) and the two constructs have similar relationships with variables like performance and tenure (Carless,

Fewings-Hall, Hall, Hemsworth, & Coleman, 2007). Previous research points to a positive relationship between POQ and turnover intentions (Kraimer et al., 2009; Maynard et al., 2006; McKee-Ryan et al., 2009). Thus, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 1: POQ will positively correlate with turnover intentions.

Turnover intentions involve an element of choice and imply actual capability to turnover. As some individuals may wish to leave his or her position, but are unable to, desire to turnover will also be included in this study.

Hypothesis 2: POQ will positively correlate with desire to turnover.

Organizational Commitment. Organizational commitment is an individual's psychological bond to the organization, including a sense of job involvement, loyalty, and a belief in the organization's values (Salincik, 2003). High commitment is beneficial for both employers and employees (Pinder, 1998), offering employees a sense of identity, satisfaction, and security while offering employers low turnover and a stable workforce. However, today workers are not expected to remain within a single organization for the duration of their careers (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Kickul, Lester, & Finkl, 2002). Researchers typically conceptualize commitment in terms of three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Recent research has explored individual facets of commitment independent from the others (Elias, 2009), and this study will focus on the relationship between affective and continuance organizational commitments and POQ.

Affective organizational commitment is defined as "an affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is

involved in, and enjoys membership in, the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 2). It is experienced when an individual wants to continue working for a specific organization and closely identifies with the organization (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). A 2005 meta-analysis found that affective organizational commitment is positively related to job performance ($\rho = .27$) and negatively related to turnover ($\rho = -.20$; Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005). Previous findings also indicate that affective organizational commitment is negatively related to POQ (Johnson et al., 2002; Maynard et al., 2006; McKee-Ryan et al., 2009). These findings suggest that if an individual experiences POQ, he or she is more likely to want to leave the organization.

Hypothesis 3: POQ will negatively correlate with affective organizational commitment.

Continuance organizational commitment is commitment one feels toward the organization because the costs of leaving the organization are high (Cooper-Hakin & Viswesvaran, 2005; Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Morrow, 1993). Continuance organizational commitment involves the ease with which one can leave his or her current organization for another and is reportedly negatively related to job performance ($\rho = -.12$) and negatively related to turnover ($\rho = -.25$; Cooper-Hakin & Viswesvaran, 2005). Limited research is available regarding the relationship between POQ and continuance organizational commitment. However, it is expected that an individual who perceives him or herself to have few available alternatives may remain with the organization despite the experience of POQ.

In fact, he or she may be more likely to experience POQ since, due to circumstance, is being forced to remain with the organization.

Hypothesis 4: POQ will positively correlate with continuance organizational commitment.

Job Satisfaction. Job satisfaction is an individual's subjective assessment of work (Johnson & Johnson, 2000b) and is defined as the response of an individual to the circumstances of his or her working environment that is shaped by his or her interpretations and perceptions of the objective work conditions (Johnson & Johnson, 1996, 2000b; Maynard et al., 2006). POQ can be a source of job dissatisfaction, which, in turn, may lead to higher turnover intentions and other work withdrawal symptoms (Johnson & Johnson, 2000b). Fine and Nevo (2008) found a negative relationship between POQ and job satisfaction ($r = -.44$) for customer service representatives. Johnson and Johnson (2000b) looked at two components of POQ in relation to job satisfaction: perceived lack of growth opportunity and perceived mismatch of individual qualifications and job requirements (mismatch). They found that both perceived lack of growth opportunity ($r = -.57$) and mismatch ($r = -.33$) were significantly negatively related to work satisfaction. Another study involving postal workers found that POQ had a negative effect on job satisfaction, with POQ accounting for 34% of the variance (Johnson & Johnson, 2000a). Most recently, Erdogan and Bauer (2009) found that POQ was negatively related to job satisfaction. In accordance with the findings of previous research, it is expected that individuals with higher POQ are more likely to experience job dissatisfaction.

Hypothesis 5: POQ will negatively correlate with job satisfaction.

Performance. Researchers agree that the relationship between POQ and performance has not received adequate research attention (Bolino & Feldman, 2000; Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Erdogan et al., 2011; Fine & Nevo, 2008). There are two conflicting approaches to making decisions about whether to hire overqualified candidates based on expected performance. According to Fine and Nevo (2008), some organizations currently avoid hiring overqualified individuals in order to avoid costly turnover, after which organizational performance may suffer. Nonetheless, some employers reportedly intentionally hire overqualified individuals in anticipation of eventual promotion (Bills, 1992; Dekker, de Grip, & Heijke, 2002). To date, very little is known about the appropriateness of either approach.

Recently Erdogan and Bauer (2009) surveyed 244 Turkish retail associates and obtained objective performance data. A key contribution of their study is the positive link between POQ and objective performance since they found that individuals with higher POQ demonstrated higher performance than those with lower scores. Erdogan and Bauer (2009) proposed that although employees with higher POQ are more likely to turnover, they are also able to make valuable contributions based on actual ability level that compensate for the cost of their shorter employment periods with the organization. Moreover, they found that the effects of POQ on performance may be moderated by employee empowerment. Few studies have explored the relationship between POQ and performance, and further research in alternative cultural contexts is needed. In accordance with Erdogan and Bauer's (2009) recent findings, we propose that:

Hypothesis 6: POQ will positively correlate with performance.

Career Calling

Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) divide work orientation into three categories: job, career, and calling. They explain that monetary or material compensation motivates people who hold a “job” orientation. If motivated by the opportunity for advancement and achievement, employees are considered to be in a “career” orientation. In contrast, when an individual attempts to make the world a better place and experiences personal fulfillment through his or her work, he or she is considered to have a “calling.”

A number of theorists have attempted to propose clear definitions of calling orientation. Duffy & Sedlacek (2007) state that the experience of a calling is best understood through a process including three vital ingredients. The individual should first experience a force that motivates him or her to perform a task or job. Meanwhile, the individual must pursue meaning; third and finally, he or she must personally hold other-oriented values, which are one’s propensity to be concerned with, and to be helpful to, others (Meglino & Korsgaard, 2007). Other definitions are less restrictive, for example, stating that calling is simply a career used to serve the greater good and gain personal fulfillment (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) which can be achieved through a sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000) while leading to an experience of intrinsic motivation (Buskist et al., 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Unique from typical conceptions of commitment, these associated rewards specifically reflect the impact an individual can have on others. Callings are generally conceptualized as lifelong convictions that involve both a sense of meaning and

purpose while facilitating the experience of intense personal commitment to the profession, regardless any of required sacrifice (Buskist et al., 2005).

In general, calling is associated with the experience of wholeness, satisfaction, and fulfillment, although at times the pursuit of a calling means sacrificing some forms of satisfaction (Hall, 2008). For example, people must often be willing to sacrifice higher pay, time with their families, and less demanding positions in order to pursue their callings. Although many may experience a calling, few may actually pursue it due to the uncertainty and cost involved; hence, callings are personal convictions that can be ignored, but are clear and undeniably present (Hall, 2008). The state of experiencing a calling is not only an ultimate goal, but also a challenging process that involves a series of deliberate actions that must be taken in order to find, act upon, and live within a calling (Hall & Chandler, 2005). The effects of the experience of a calling have received inadequate research attention.

This study will explore the potential mitigating effects calling may have on the relationship between POQ and undesirable work outcomes. Since the pursuit of a calling can inherently involve personal sacrifice, it is possible that the tolerance of high levels of POQ may be a related benefit of attracting, selecting, and hiring employees with a career calling orientation. In other words, calling may act as a buffer against the inclination that employees with high POQ have to quit or exhibit other negative attitudes and behaviors. The experience of a calling will mitigate the generally negative relationships between the outcome variables and POQ. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 7: Calling orientation will moderate the relationship between POQ and turnover intentions such that the relationship will be weaker when calling is high.

Hypothesis 8: Calling orientation will moderate the relationship between POQ and desire to turnover such that the relationship will be weaker when calling is high.

Hypothesis 9: Calling orientation will moderate the relationship between POQ and affective organizational commitment such that the relationship will be weaker when calling is high.

Hypothesis 10: Calling orientation will moderate the relationship between POQ and continuance organizational commitment such that the relationship will be weaker when calling is high.

Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) found that people who experience callings had both higher life and job satisfaction. In fact, Hall and Chandler (2005) suggest that one of the deepest forms of satisfaction and psychological success can occur when an individual holds a calling.

Hypothesis 11: Calling orientation will moderate the relationship between POQ and job satisfaction such that the relationship will be weaker when calling is high.

According to previous research, those who experience a calling are more likely to invest time and effort in their work, which usually results in higher performance (Serow, 1994). Additionally, theorists believe that those who have callings may be better able to perform and maintain high levels of performance due to high adaptability, and willingness to change, that come from a clear sense of identity and self-awareness (Hall & Chandler, 2005). It is thought that employees with callings are better able to identify their strengths and

weaknesses, and make personal changes to meet the demands of the work. This heightened awareness is called self-directed career performance, which is an ultimate result of the experience of a calling, though the mechanisms of increased self-confidence, the pursuit of challenging goals, and increase in effort (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Since both calling and POQ are considered to be positively associated to performance, the presence of both experiences simultaneously may result in compounded, increased levels of performance.

Hypothesis 12: Calling orientation will moderate the relationship between POQ and performance such that the relationship will be stronger when calling is high.

Method

Participants

The sample of 170 teachers came from K-12 public school online databases of teacher email addresses. The contact information was acquired for a single school district in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Participants who completed less than 50% of the survey were excluded from the data analysis. About half (50.4%) of respondents were elementary school teachers, while about a third were high school teachers (30.1%), and about a fifth were middle school teachers (19.5%). Females comprised 86.1% of the respondents. Most respondents self-identified as “White or Caucasian” (90.8%), followed by 3.9% “Hispanic or Latino,” 3.3% “Black or African American,” 1.3% were “Asian,” and 0.7% reported themselves as being “Pacific Islander.” Participants ages ranged from 23-75 years of age ($M = 40.65$, $SD = 13.05$) with tenure spanning less than one year, to 29 years ($M = 7.19$, $SD = 6.42$).

Procedures

To solicit participants, emails were sent to approximately 1,000 suburban public school teachers requesting their participation. The email recruitment letter explained that completion of the study would require approximately 15 minutes, provided a brief explanation of the research, and a description of the participation incentive. One in ten participants were randomly selected to receive a Starbucks gift card in the mail. The email text also included a link to the online survey. To ensure anonymity of the data, all identifying information was collected in a separate, second survey linked to the last page of the general survey. Teachers who did not respond to the initial participation request were sent follow-up emails, up to two times, with at least one week between each reminder.

Measures

All items were on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7= *strongly agree*) unless otherwise noted.

Perceived Overqualification. POQ was assessed via the mismatch items of the Johnson and Johnson's (1997) original measure that inquires about perceived inconsistencies between the characteristics of the person and the demands of the position. The 4-items yielded an alpha coefficient of .74 in this sample. Example questions include "my talents are not fully utilized on my job" and "based on my skills, I am overqualified for my job".

Turnover Attitudes. Turnover intention was measured through a single self-report item "how often have you seriously considered quitting your present job?" originally created by Spector (1985). Additionally, desire to turnover was assessed using a 3-item measure

including “if I could, I would leave this job” (Craig & Gustafson, 1998). These items had an alpha of .85 in this sample.

Commitment. Affective school commitment and continuance school commitment were measured through two 9-item scales adapted from the organizational commitment measure originally developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). In this sample, Allen and Meyer’s (1990) scale had a coefficient alpha of .88 for affective organizational commitment and .80 for continuance organizational commitment. In order for the measure to be more easily understood by teachers, all references to the “organization” were changed to “school”. Example items are “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this school” and “it would be very hard for me to leave my school right now, even if I wanted to”.

Job Satisfaction. Participants reported their job satisfaction on a short measure developed by Judge, Bono, and Locke (2000) based on the original work of Brayfield and Rothe (1951). All items were on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*, $\alpha = .85$). Items include “most days I am enthusiastic about work” and “I find real enjoyment in my work”.

Performance. A self-reported performance item was adapted from Schoorman and Mayer (2008). It required that the incumbent rate their performance on a scale from 1 to 10, with 5 being adequate and 10 being outstanding. The stem of the item was “identify the rating you were given at the time of your last performance appraisal”.

Calling. Calling is a subjective aspect of work requiring self-reported measures to both identify and understand the experience (Hall & Chandler, 2005); therefore the

Vocational Identity Questionnaire developed by Dreher, Holloway, and Schoenfelder (2007) was used. The reliability of the scale was .78 and it included items such as “I see my work as a way to make a positive difference in the world” and “I have a calling that enables me use my skills and talents in a meaningful way”. The items were written to reflect calling-related themes of commitment, satisfaction, accomplishment, flow, motivation, meaning, and significance.

Results

A series of correlation and moderation analyses were conducted in order to assess the proposed hypotheses. As presented in Table 1, correlations were used to investigate the main effects of POQ on each work outcome. Hypotheses 1-6 explored these questions, with Hypotheses 1 and 2 relating to turnover. Both of these hypotheses were supported by the data with POQ being positively related to both turnover intentions and desire to turnover. Similarly, Hypothesis 3 was supported as affective organizational commitment was negatively related to POQ. However, Hypothesis 4 was not supported as POQ was not significantly correlated with continuance organizational commitment. As expected, in support of Hypothesis 5, POQ was negatively related to job satisfaction. Lastly, POQ was not significantly correlated with self-reported performance.

As presented in Table 2, Hypotheses 7-12 involved moderation analyses using hierarchical moderated regression. Level of school (i.e., elementary, middle, & high) was entered as a categorical control variable in the regression analyses. In the first regression model, the control variable was included and in the second model POQ and career calling

were added. To test the moderating effects of calling, a third model included interaction terms for each relevant hypothesis. Variables were centered in order to reduce multicollinearity (Yi, 1989).

Hypothesis 7 and 8 explored calling as a moderator between POQ and two types of turnover attitudes: intentions and desires. Although POQ was positively associated with both, calling did not significantly moderate either of these variables. Similarly, the data did not support Hypothesis 9, as calling did not moderate the relationship between POQ and affective organizational commitment.

However, Hypothesis 10 was supported. The interaction term of calling with POQ was significant with respect to continuance commitment ($b = .17, p < .01$). Aiken and West's (1991) method was used to plot the interaction; conditional values of the moderator, career calling, were chosen one standard deviation above and below the mean and are presented in Figure 1. As POQ increases, for those low in calling, continuance commitment decreases, while for those high in calling, continuance commitment increases. Nonetheless, as Figure 1 suggests, levels of continuance commitment remain higher for those with low calling than for those with high calling. As expected, the positive relationship between POQ and organizational commitment is weaker when calling is high.

Hypothesis 11 was not supported. Although POQ was positively related to job satisfaction, calling did not moderate the relationship. Nonetheless, the final hypothesis, exploring calling as a moderator between POQ and performance was supported with a significant interaction between POQ and calling ($b = -.21, p < .05$). This support for

Hypothesis 12 emerged despite the lack of support for hypothesis 6; there was no significant correlation between POQ and performance. Aiken and West's method (1991) were used to graph the results, which appear in Figure 2. The figure illustrates that as POQ increases, for those with high calling, performance decreases while, for those with low calling, performance increases. Overall, however, those who report high calling have higher performance than those with low levels of calling.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the moderating role of career calling orientation between POQ and important work outcomes. POQ is an emerging topic of interest (Erdogan et al., 2001) and its relation to calling has received no research attention. High POQ relates to a number of important outcomes, such as lower job satisfaction (Fine, 2007; Fine & Nevo, 2008; Johnson & Johnson, 2000a, 2000b; Johnson et al., 2002) and higher turnover intentions (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Maynard et al., 2006), so it is important to understand the variables, such as calling, that may alter one's experiences at work. As with previous studies (Fine & Nevo, 2008; Maynard et al., 2006), POQ was related to turnover attitudes, affective commitment, and job satisfaction. Also, although POQ was not significantly correlated with continuance organizational commitment and performance, the interactions between POQ and calling were significant for both outcomes. These findings offer original contributions to the POQ literature, which will benefit from the exploration of calling orientation as a moderator.

POQ-Outcome Relationships

In this study, POQ was negatively related to self-reported job satisfaction and affective commitment, and positively related to turnover intentions and desire to turnover. These findings may be due to the desire of incumbents to seek challenge through work (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). In some cases, employees may experience frustration, and thus lower satisfaction or affective commitment, from not using the knowledge, skills, and abilities they possess and have worked to acquire. Additionally, the negative relationship may be due to a mismatch between feelings of self-worth and the value of the position. For instance, an individual who has been working for two decades in a well-paid, managerial position who is laid off and forced to accept an entry-level position in another field, with considerably lower pay and benefits, will experience both underutilization of skills and negative social comparison with his or her former position (Folger, 1984).

The negative POQ-job satisfaction relationship is consistent with Fine and Nevo's (2008) study, which revealed a negative relationship between job satisfaction and POQ among customer service representatives. The results provide further support for this relationship in a sample of employees from k-12 educational settings. Similarly, it appears that POQ may lead to negative emotional interpretations (affective organizational commitment) about one's work organization and thus decreased desire to stay with the organization. Both of these findings may be attributable to discontent stemming from perceived mismatch between one's sense of self-worth and the importance of his or her work, as well as from the under-utilization of one's KSAOs.

This study provides evidence for a positive relationship between POQ and turnover intentions and desire to turnover, implying that individuals who experience POQ may desire more challenge through positions for which they feel more adequately qualified. With turnover being a significant cost for organizations, this finding suggests that employers may benefit from avoiding hiring job candidates who are overqualified for a particular position. Alternatively, it may be useful for organizations to consider adopting new practices to better utilize employees KSAOs and increase the perceived value of even low-level positions. Such framing may serve to decrease the troubling distance between one's self-worth and value of his or her work by improving the perceived importance of the task or job at hand.

Calling as a Moderator

Significant interactions existed between POQ and calling in relation to two outcome variables: continuance organizational commitment and performance. The results suggest that, overall, those with low calling had higher levels of continuance commitment than those who had high calling. Employees who have low levels of calling may be staying at the organization out of necessity, due to a lack of perceived alternative employment opportunities. According to the results, for an individual with both low calling and high POQ, his or her perceived cost of leaving the organization is lower, which may occur due to an increased expectation regarding the existence of desirable alternatives. These alternatives may promise to better utilize KSAOs or offer more valuable rewards. Such work characteristics may be more highly valued by individuals not experiencing the sacrificial motivation of a calling.

Alternatively, individuals may be in situations marked by high POQ and high calling because of a lack of alternatives; specifically alternatives that simultaneously offer the highly valued experience of a calling, as well as low POQ. Therefore a choice is made to stay in the high calling position, despite the experience of POQ. Continuance organizational commitment is typically conceptualized as involving a lack of choice and being forced to stay in a position, however, it is possible that someone with high calling orientation may experience continuance commitment because they could not pursue the highly valued calling elsewhere. It is also possible that those who experience POQ, but are unable to leave their jobs, may resolve associated dissonance by changing their interpretation of the work situation to that of a calling. Such individuals may search for meaning or purpose in their work as a way to adapt to their inflexible and undesirable work situations.

The relationship between POQ and performance being moderated by calling also offers an important contribution to the literature. While some previous research has found POQ to be related to increased performance (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Fine & Nevo, 2008) some has found evidence of a negative relationship (Bolino & Feldman, 2000), so researchers agree that the POQ-performance relationship requires additional research attention in order for it to be fully understood (Bolino & Feldman, 2000; Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Fine & Nevo, 2008). The findings of this study support the theories of Hall and Chandler (2005) in that overall those with a high calling orientation report higher performance than those with low calling, and that the interactions are in divergent directions.

This means that as levels of POQ increase, performance decreased for those with high calling.

This finding suggests that performance is highest for those with high calling, possibly due to increased interest and dedication, and low POQ, which contributes a sense of fair matching between one's self and the position. However, in the presence of high POQ, performance is slightly lower for those with a high sense of calling. This finding may be explained by relative deprivation theory (cf. Mirowsky & Ross, 1989) through which the experience of negative emotions is due to a discrepancy between actual experience and a priori expectations. Those who are disappointed with their job match in terms of qualification levels may not exert as much effort in order to restore equity. Of course, the levels of performance for those with high calling are still generally higher than for those with low calling. Alternatively, as levels of POQ increase for those with low calling, performance increased. It is possible that the individual's actual qualifications may be more than those required to do the job, therefore making them better at it and improving their performance. It is important to note that performance was self-reported, so those who experience POQ may *think* or claim they are doing better than those who do not experience POQ.

Implications

Theoretical Implications. This study contributes to the POQ and calling literatures in a number of respects. First, while it confirms previous findings that have been published, it offers additional theoretical justification for such results based on relative deprivation theory (Mirowsky & Ross, 1989). We believe that negative affective reactions can result from

unpleasant feelings of discrepancy stemming from two sources: 1) underutilized KSAOs, and 2) undesirable work outcomes that signal low status or worth. In either case, there are inconsistencies between one's expectations and actual experiences in the workplace. Higher turnover intentions, higher desire to turnover, lower job satisfaction, and lower affective commitment are attitudinal variables linked to POQ due to unpleasant feelings of discrepancy. Employees with high POQ are either frustrated by the underutilization of their KSAOs or are displeased with the low status of their job, leading to these negative work attitudes.

This study also sheds light on two additional variables: continuance commitment and performance. These variables highlight the potential for theoretical advancement of POQ through the use of moderators. As has been described, while there was no significant relationship between POQ and continuance commitment, there was a significant interaction between POQ and calling in predicting continuance commitment, suggesting that such non-significant relationships cannot be discounted without considering additional variables. The relationship between POQ and continuance commitment is complex. Continuance commitment is unaffected by the psychological mechanisms leading to POQ (e.g., low KSAO usage and a lack of desirable status-related outcomes), possibly because continuance commitment is less of a subjective attitude or choice, and more of an experience based on objective costs.

High calling decreases perceived costs, possibly because KSAO usage and status are of lesser importance under such psychological conditions, and employees are staying with

the organization because they want to stay, rather than because they have to stay. The experience of discrepancy, which links POQ to negative work outcomes, is mitigated in the presence of a calling. Additionally, the results suggest that the link between POQ and performance must be qualified by calling. While POQ may be connected to higher performance due to higher ability, not all people who experience POQ are actually overqualified. Therefore, only under certain psychological conditions can the link be made, such as in the presence of a calling. These findings support the theories of Hall and Chandler (2008), which suggest that those who experience callings are better able to perform due to increased self-confidence, effort, and interest in pursuing challenging goals.

A major theoretical contribution of this study is the idea that calling changes peoples' interpretations of work in desirable ways, even in the presence of high POQ. Calling may decrease the negative affective reactions associated with underutilized KSAOs and also decrease concern associated with a lack of desirable status-related work outcomes. In other words, the psychological mechanisms through which POQ operates, in turn leading to negative work outcomes, are mitigated by the experience of a calling.

Organizational Implications. There are a number of practical implications that can be drawn from the findings. First, it is to an organization's advantage to hire individuals who experience a calling orientation. However, in the event that there are no job candidates available who report being called to an available position, it may be strategic to hire overqualified individuals, as POQ is associated with higher performance than low POQ for those low in calling. Alternatively, hiring managers should consider that those with higher

POQ also report lower affective commitment, satisfaction, and stronger turnover attitudes. Therefore, the duration of the employment opportunity and the goals of the hiring organization should also be taken into consideration. For short-term employees, where turnover is expected due to the nature of the position, hiring overqualified individuals is more advantageous. However, if the organization is more concerned with maintaining low turnover rates (e.g., high initial training costs) and better morale, it is more strategic to hire individuals who are not overqualified.

All of these implications are contingent upon practitioners being able to correctly discern the presence of a calling in potential job candidates. It is possible that educated interviewers may be able to probe for evidence of a calling orientation by asking pointed questions and detecting sincere enthusiasm. However, questionnaires may be prone to faking. Shrewd measurement composition and assessment techniques may mitigate the disadvantages associated with using the subjective construct for decision-making.

Finally, although callings are personal convictions, it may be to the organization's advantage to foster a sense of purpose and meaning in the workplace. There may be performance-based benefits associated with increasing contact with consumers/customers, philanthropic activities, and general appreciation for each employee's contribution to the organization's goals. Regular reminders of the organization's mission and socially constructive goals, even if not closely linked with each employee's day-to-day activities, may cultivate a sense of purpose that reaps some of the psychological benefits associated with the experience of a calling.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study is not without limitation, it serves as a platform from which future research can develop. Measures were self-reported from a single source, introducing potential common method bias. Due to the personal, psychological nature of the hypotheses including calling, POQ, turnover intentions and desires, job satisfaction, and commitment, self-report measures are the only valid means to provide such information. While performance would have ideally been collected using archival resources, the self-reported item was based on a frame-of-reference to one's most recent performance evaluation. This method has been used effectively and validated in previous research by Schoorman and Mayer (2008).

Another potential limitation of this study is in participant selection bias. Respondents were recruited through "cold" emails and participation was voluntary. It is possible that those who chose to respond to a random email request may have had unique traits or characteristics, such as other-orientation or an appreciation for research, which quietly influenced the data and findings. Additionally, the sample was comprised of individuals from a single county in affluent area of the nation. The demographic make-up of the sample of teachers, as well as the students they serve, could reduce the generalizability of findings to less privileged areas. It is possible that education levels and pay may be higher in the sample, as compared to other regions, affecting rates of POQ. Participation was also limited to those who have Internet access and check email.

Future research would benefit from replicating this study among a more diverse sample to increase generalizability. A survey of educators across the nation and members of other professions would be useful data points for comparison. Additionally, explorations of actual overqualification in relation to POQ, as well as actual turnover and objective performance records, as moderated by calling, deserve research attention.

A full exploration of the mechanisms behind reports of continuance organizational commitment is needed. Researchers should investigate the different forces that may be increasing the perceived cost of leaving. A lack of feasible alternatives due to a poor economy is different from a lack of desirable alternatives due to the unavailability of jobs that foster the pursuit of one's calling. The literature would also benefit from comparing self-reported performance to objective performance records to identify whether or not the POQ-calling interaction identified in this study is upheld. Additionally, future research is needed to confirm that, and explore why, those with a high sense of calling report lower performance, in the event of high POQ.

Summary

This study offers novel contributions to the POQ literature. While providing further evidence for POQ's relationship to a number of important work outcomes such as turnover intentions, desire to turnover, affective commitment, and job satisfaction, it fulfills Erdogan and Bauer (2009)'s call for the exploration of potential moderating variables by introducing calling orientation. The results suggest a more intricate relationship between POQ and performance than has previously been considered in the literature. The results also indicate a

significant interaction between calling and POQ in relation to continuance commitment, which like performance, did not originally result in a significant relationship with POQ. As expected, the experience of a calling mitigated the negative outcomes in the presence of POQ. These findings should inspire curiosity regarding the untapped interactions that may improve our understanding of POQ as a predictor of attitudes and behavior at work.

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Table 1

Intercorrelations among POQ and self-reported outcomes

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. POQ	3.80	1.34	--						
2. Turnover Intentions	2.17	1.04	.26**	--					
3. Desire to Turnover	2.71	1.59	.38**	.66**	--				
4. Affective Commitment	4.83	1.16	-.38**	-.47**	-.64**	--			
5. Continuance Commitment	4.36	1.17	-.07	.22**	.15	-.17*	--		
6. Job Satisfaction	5.68	.92	-.35**	-.55**	-.58**	.66**	-.16*	--	
7. Performance	8.93	1.13	.01	-.24**	-.23**	-.22**	-.22**	.33**	--

Note. N > 161 for all variables. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 2

Regression Models Testing Career Calling as a Moderator

Variable	Turnover Intentions (Hypothesis 7)			Desire to Turnover (Hypothesis 8)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Level of School	-.00	-.05	-.05	-.02	-.08	-.08
POQ		.11	-.39		.15*	.15*
Calling		-.39**	-.38**		-.57**	-.57**
POQ x Calling			-.03			.01
Model R^2	.00	.19	.19	-.01	.37	.37
ΔR^2		.19	.00		.38	.00

Note. $N > 161$ for all variables. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Reported regression coefficients are standardized.

Table 2

Continued

Variable	Affective Commitment (Hypothesis 9)			Continuance Commitment (Hypothesis 10)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Level of School	-.04	.03	.03	-.05	-.07	-.07
POQ		-.18**	-.19**		.15	.16
Calling		-.61**	.58**		-.21*	-.25**
POQ x Calling			.10			.17*
Model R^2	-.01	.44	.44	-.01	.03	.05
ΔR^2		.45	.00		.04	.02

Note. $N > 161$ for all variables. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Reported regression coefficients are standardized.

Table 2

Continued

Variable	Job Satisfaction (Hypothesis 11)			Performance (Hypothesis 12)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Level of School	.07	.14*	.14*	-.03	-.01	-.01
POQ		-.16*	-.17**		.10	.12
Calling		.66**	.64**		.30**	.35**
POQ x Calling			.10			-.21*
Model R^2	-.00	.51	.51	-.01	.06	.10
ΔR^2		.51	.00		.07	.03

Note. $N > 161$ for all variables. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Reported regression coefficients are standardized.

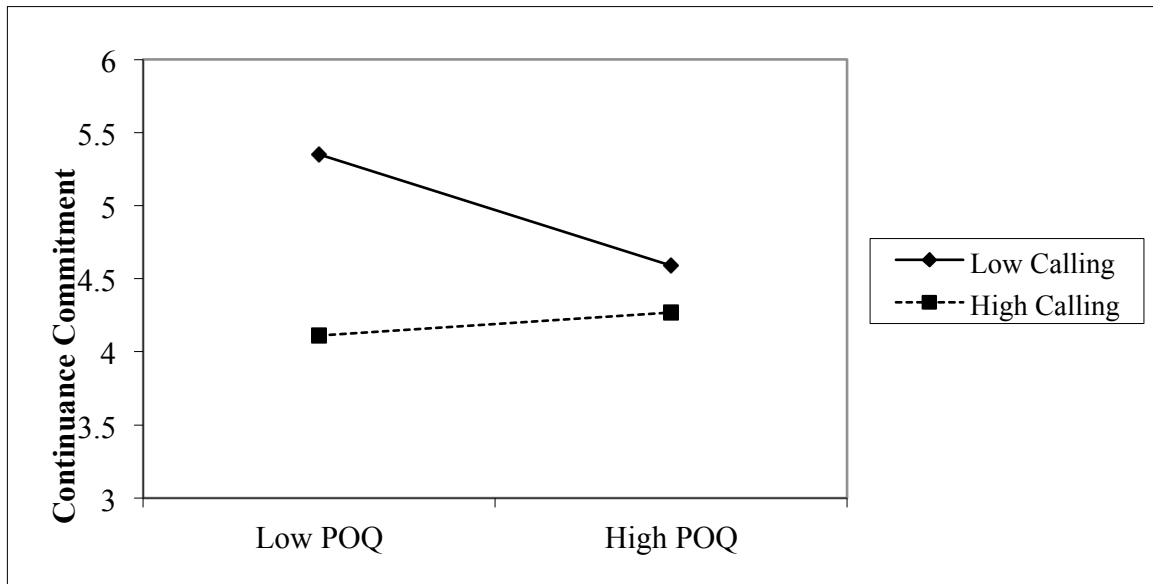


Figure 1. Two-way interaction effects for continuance commitment.

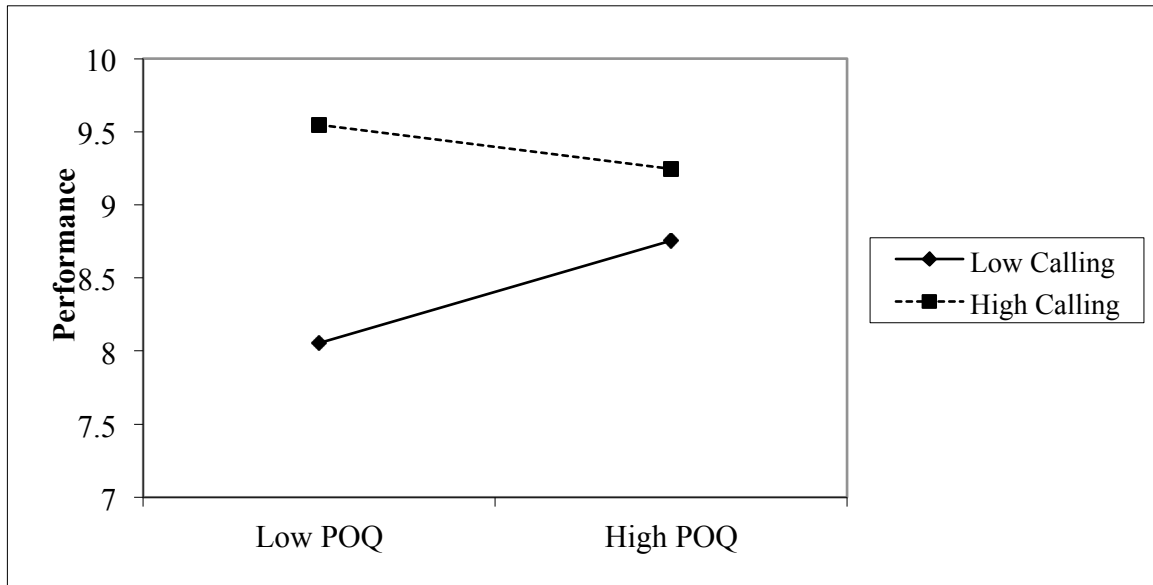


Figure 2. Two-way interaction effects for performance.